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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/537,744	12/16/2005	Robert Glyn Lewin	014875-000005	3554
24239 7590 04/23/2009 MOORE & VAN ALLEN PLLC P.O. BOX 13706 Research Triangle Park, NC 27709				
EXAMINER				
MENDEZ, ZULMARIAM				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
1795				
MAIL DATE		DELIVERY MODE		
04/23/2009		PAPER		

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/537,744

Applicant(s)

LEWIN ET AL.

Examiner

ZULMARIAM MENDEZ

Art Unit

1795

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 06 June 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-11 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-11 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SF/ICE)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 08/10/2005
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

2. Claims 1, 2, 4-9 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hatter (WO 01/41152).

With regard to claims 1 and 2, Hatter discloses a process for reducing to metallic form a metal oxide (page 2, lines 13-14), said metals comprising metal oxides in a mixed oxide sample (page 2, lines 25-26), the process comprising: (i) adding the mixed oxide to a molten salt electrolyte and cathodically electrolyzing the oxide (page 2, lines 14-15), the potential of the cathode being controlled so as to favour oxygen ionization over deposition of metal from the cations present in the molten salt (page 2, lines 15-17), and the applied potential difference being such as to facilitate selective reduction of one metal oxide at the expense of other metal oxides (page 2, lines 19-23); and (ii) separating the metal from the remaining metal oxides wherein said metal oxides comprise oxides of metals from at least one of the actinide series, such as uranium and plutonium (page 2, lines 25-26 and page 4, lines 1-8).

With regard to claim 4, Hatter teaches wherein the mixed oxide is provided as solid pieces of irregular size and shape, a powder, an amorphous mass, or a dense solid agglomerate (page 2, lines 28-31).

With regard to claim 5, Hatter further discloses wherein the oxide is located in a mesh basket which forms the cathode (page 3, lines 6-7).

With regard to claims 6 and 7, Hatter teaches wherein the molten salt electrolyte comprises at least one chloride salt, such as CaCl_2 or BaCl_2 (page 3, lines 7-8).

With regard to claim 8, Hatter discloses wherein the anode is a carbon anode (page 3, lines 10 and 18).

With regard to claim 9, Hatter teaches wherein the step of separating the metal from the remaining metal oxides is carried out by electrochemical means (page 4, lines 1-8).

With regard to claims 10 and 11, Hatter further discloses wherein said reduction of the selected metal oxide is carried out in one molten salt whilst separation of the metal from the other metal oxide or oxides is effected in a different molten salt composition (page 4, lines 1-4) or wherein said reduction of the selected metal oxide and said separation of the metal from the other metal oxide or oxides is performed in the same molten salt (page 4, lines 6-8).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

5. Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hatter, as applied to claim 1 above.

With regard to claim 3, Hatter discloses all of the method steps, as applied to claim 1 above, but fails to explicitly teach wherein said metals comprise zirconium and hafnium and said mixed oxide sample comprises mixed zirconium and hafnium oxides. However, Hatter teaches reducing to a metallic form a mixture of metal oxides and separating the metal from the remaining metal oxide (page 2, lines 13-23). Therefore, one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention would have found it obvious to use the process of Hatter in order to reduce and separate hafnium and zirconium from a mixed oxide sample comprising mixed Zr and Hf oxides.

Conclusion

6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to ZULMARIAM MENDEZ whose telephone number is (571)272-9805. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday from 9am to 5pm.

7. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Alexa D. Neckel can be reached on 571-272-1446. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.
8. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Harry D Wilkins, III/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1795

/Z. M./
Examiner, Art Unit 1795